

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 06593 161544Z

42

ACTION SS-25

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R 161333Z JUL 75
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9702
INFO AMEMBASY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 6593

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PN CO
SUBJECT: PNAMA CANAL ISSUE ANDPRESIDENTIAL MTG IN SANTA MARTA

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER TODAY, I BROUGHT UP THE UPCOMING MTG JULY 28 OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ, PRESIDENT PEREZ AND GENERAL TORRIJOS AT SANTA MARTA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 450TH ANNIVERSARY OF THAT CITY'S FOUNDING. I ASKED IF HE EXPECTED ANY DISCUSSION OR DECLARATION REGARDING THE CANAL ISSUE. THE MINISTER SAID THAT THE MTG WAS LARGELY CEREMONIAL BUT OF COURSE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS WOULD BE HELD AMONG THE THREE AND OF COURSE THE CANAL WAS BOUND TO COME UP. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT TORRIJOS WOULD SEEK, AND HE HAS DELIBERATELY NOT TRIED TO ASCERTAIN IN ADVANCE WHAT PANAMA HAD IN MIND IN THIS REGARD BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT TO ENCOURAGE ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR.

2. THE MINISTER SAID THAT SOME SORT OF DECLARATION WOULD EMERGE ABOUT THEIR TALKS IN GENERAL. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE OTHER PRESIDENTS WOULD WANT TO SAY ABOUT THE CANAL, BUT COLOMBIA HAD NO RPT NO DESIRE TO BE SHRILL ABOUT THE CANAL ISSUE, NOR DID THE GOC BELIEVE IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO TRY AND PUT PUBLIC PRESSURE ON THE US. COLOMBIA WOULD TRY TO TEMPER ANY PUBLIC DECLARATION AT SANTA MARTA. LIEVANO SAID THAT, IN FACT,
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PRESIDENT LOPEZ HAD PLANS TO SPEAK TO TORRIJOS PRIVATELY

TO SAY TO HIM THAT TO EXPRESS PUBLIC THREATS, WAS VERY POOR STRATEGY AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, AND THAT TORRIJOS SHOULD COOL IT.

3. LIEVANO WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE VIEWED THE CURRENT US CONGRESSIONAL REACTION AND CRITICISM AS EVIDENCE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS IN FACT COMPLYING WITH ITS PLEDGE TO CONCLUDE A TREATY, AND COLOMBIA WAS GRATEFUL TO THE SECRETARY FOR FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH HIS PROMISES THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD PUSH TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE. THE EXISTING CRITICISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, LIEVANO REASONED, BUT HAS BEEN DORMANT BECAUSE THE CRITICS THOUGHT THE ISSUE WAS DRAGGING ALONG. WITH EVIDENCE THE NEGOTIATIONS MAY BE COMING TO A HEAD, THE CRITICS ARE ACTING. EVERYONE RECOGNIZES THAT THE US HAS SERIOUS INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITH THIS ISSUE, AND THE GOC BELIEVES THAT THE US MUST DETERMINE ITS OWN TIMING. THEREFORE, IT WOULD FEEL THAT TO ADD TO PRESIDENT FORD'S DOMESTIC PROBLEMS WITH INTEMPERATE DECLARATIONS WOULD BE UNHELPFUL.

4. I SAID WE APPRECIATED THIS AND PRESIDENT LOPEZ CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE ON THIS MATTER.

VAKY

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